

# CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

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VOL. II.

PHILADELPHIA, SATURDAY, JANUARY 13, 1821.

NO. 24.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you—JOHN xiii. 34.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

SKETCHES NO. VI.

"I am that I am."

It is our intention to occupy the present number of these Sketches with the following extract from the posthumous works of Bishop Beveridge, of which it has been remarked by a celebrated author, that, "for acuteness of judgment, ornament of speech, and true sublime, it may be compared with any of the choicest writings of the ancients, who lived nearest to the apostle's time."

In treating upon that passage in the book of Exodus, where, Moses being ordered to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, he asked God, what name he should mention him by to that people, in order to dispose them to obey him: and God answered, *I am that I am*; and bade him tell them, *I am* hath sent me unto you: the admirable author thus discourses: "God having been pleased to reveal himself to us under this name or title, *I am that I am*, he thereby suggests to us, that he would not have us apprehend of him, as of any particular or limited being, but as a being in general, or the being of all beings; who giveth being to, and therefore exerciseth authority over all things in the world. He did not answer Moses, *I am the great, the living, the true, the everlasting God*; he did not say, *I am the Almighty Creator, preserver, and governor of the whole world*; but, *I am that I am*. Intimating, that, if Moses desired such a name of God, as might fully describe his nature as in itself, that is a thing impossible, there being no words to be found in any language, whereby to express the glory of an infinite Being; especially, so as that finite creatures should be able fully to conceive it. Yet, however, in these words he is pleased to acquaint us what kind of thoughts he would have us to entertain of him; insomuch that, could we but rightly apprehend what is couched under and intended by them, we

should, doubtless, have as high a true conceptions of God, as it is possible for creatures to have. The answer given suggests farther to us the following ideas of the most high; first, that he is *one being*, existing in, and of himself: his *unity* is implied in that he saith, *I*; his existence in that he saith, *I am*; his existence in and of himself, in that he saith, *I am that I am*, that is, *I am in and of myself*, not receiving any thing from, nor depending upon any other. The same expression implies, that, as God is only one, so he is a most pure and simple being; for here we see, he admits nothing into the manifestation of himself but pure essence, saying, *I am that I am*, that is, being itself, without any mixture or composition. And therefore we must not conceive of God, as *made up of several parts*, or faculties, or ingredients, but only as one, who is that he is, and whatsoever is in him is himself; and although we read of several properties attributed to him in Scripture, as wisdom, goodness, justice, &c. we must not conceive of them as several powers, habits, or qualities, as they are in us; for, as they are in God, they are neither distinguished from one another, nor from his nature or essence, in whom they are said to be; in whom I say they are said to be, for, to speak properly, they are not in him, but are his very essence, or nature itself; which, acting severally upon several objects, seems to us to act from several properties or perfections in him; whereas all the difference is only in our different apprehensions of the same thing. God in himself is a most simple and pure act, and therefore cannot have any thing in him but what is that most simple and pure act itself; which seeing it bringeth upon every creature what is necessary for them, we conceive of it as several divine perfections in the same Almighty Being; whereas God, whose understanding is infinite as himself, doth not apprehend himself under the distinct ideas of wisdom, or goodness,

or justice, or the like, but only Jehovah, and therefore in this place, he doth not say, I am wise, or just, or good, but simply, "*I am that I am*".

As when God thus speaks of himself and his own eternal essence, he saith, *I am that I am*; so when he speaks of himself, with reference to his creature man, he saith, *I am*. He doth not say *I am their light, their life, their guide, their strength or tower*, but only, *I AM*: He sets as it were, his hand to a blank, that his people may write over it what they please, that is good for them—as if he should say, are ye weak? *I am strength*. Are ye poor? *I am riches*. Are ye blind? *I am light*. Are ye in trouble? *I am comfort*. Are ye sick? *I am health*. Are ye dying? *I am life*. Have ye nothing? *I am all things*. *I am wisdom and power, I am justice and mercy, I am grace and goodness, I am glory, I am beauty, holiness, all sufficiency, eternity, Jehovah—I am*: whatsoever is suitable to your nature, or convenient for you in your several conditions, that *I am*: whatsoever is pure and holy, whatsoever is great or pleasant, whatsoever is good or needful to make men happy, that *I am*. So that, in short, God here represents himself to us, as a universal good, and leaves us to make the application of it to ourselves; according to our several wants, capacities, and desires, by saying only in general, *I am*.

There is more solid joy and comfort, more real delight and satisfaction of mind, in one single thought of God, rightly formed, than all the riches, and honours, and pleasures of this world, put them all together, are able to afford. Let us then call in all our scattered thoughts from all things here below, and raise them up, and unite them all to the most high God; not apprehending him under the idea, image, or likeness of any thing else, but as infinitely greater and higher, and better than all things; as one existing in and of himself, and giving essence and existence to all things in the world, besides him.

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self; as one so pure and simple, that there is nothing in him but himself—but simple essence and being. As one so infinite and omnipotent, that, wheresoever any thing else is in the whole world, there he is, and beyond the world, where nothing else is, there all things are, because he is there; as one so wise, so knowing, so omniscient, that he at this moment, and always sees what all angels are doing in Heaven; what all the fowls are doing in the air; what all the fishes are doing in the waters; what all the men and beasts, and the very insects, are doing upon the earth: as one so powerful and omnipotent, that he can do whatsoever he will, only by willing it should be so; as one so great so good, so glorious, so immutable, so infinite, so eternal, that the more we think of him, the more we admire him, the more we adore him, the more we love him, and the more we should; our highest conceptions of him being as much beneath him, as our greatest services come far short of what we owe him. Seeing, therefore, we cannot think of God so highly as he is, let us think of him as highly as we can; and, for that end let us get above ourselves, and above the world, and raise up our thoughts higher and higher still, and, when we get them up as high as we possibly can, let us apprehend a being infinitely higher than the highest of them; and then finding ourselves at a loss, amazed, confounded at such an infinite height of infinite perfections, let us fall down in humble and hearty desires to be freed from those dark prisons, wherein we are now immersed, that we may take our flight into eternity, and there, through the medium of our blessed Saviour, see this infinite being face to face, and enjoy him forever.

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## FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

*Origin of Universalism in Philadelphia, together with its progress and present state.*

"—Blest Religion, rob'd in spotless white,  
With torch of faith, pointing to realms of light,  
March'd splendid on, wide o'er the bright-  
ning way,  
Leading the saint to never ending day."

In 1790, the doctrine had made some progress, and a Convention was held in this city, at which Mr. Murray was

present. In an address to President Washington, we find the following statement.

"It is a singular circumstance in the history of this doctrine, that it has been preached and defended in every age since the first promulgation of the gospel, but we represent the first society professing this doctrine, that have formed themselves into an Independent Church. Posterity will hardly fail to connect this memorable event with the auspicious years of peace, liberty and free enquiry in the United States, which distinguished the administration of Gen. Washington." The reply of the General was worthy of him, and we omit it, from the narrowness of our limits. Conventions continued to be held at intervals, till 1809. The society during this period was not flourishing on account of that propensity to travel, which has attended all great preachers of this doctrine. It had, however, a few friends of very high and respectable standing. Dr. Benjamin Rush, in a letter to Mr. Winchester, while he was in London, dated, Philadelphia, May 11th 1791, thus speaks.

"The Universal doctrine prevails more and more in our country, particularly among persons eminent for their piety, in whom it is not a mere speculation, but a new principle of action in the heart, prompting to practical godliness."

In another letter, dated November 12th of the same year, he thus writes,

"Your funeral sermon upon Mr. Wesley does honour to the philanthropy of your universal principle: I admire and honour that great man above any man that has lived since the time of the apostles. His writings will ere long revive in support of our doctrine—for if Christ died for *all*, as Mr. Wesley always taught, it will soon appear a necessary consequence that *all* shall be saved.—

"I contemplate with you, the progress of reason and liberty in Europe with great pleasure.—Republican forms of government are the best repositories of the gospel: I therefore suppose they are intended as preludes to a glorious manifestation of its power and influence upon the hearts of men. The language of those free and equal governments seem to be like that of John the Baptist of old, 'Prepare ye the way

of the Lord—make his paths straight.'—At present we wish 'liberty to the whole world.'—But the next touch of the celestial magnet upon the human heart will direct it into wishes for the *Salvation of all mankind.*'"

In July 1793, the society purchased a lot in Lombard street, and proceeded to build thereon the present church, 80 feet front by 50 deep. Determined to prevent the hands of bigots from barring their doors, they resolved that any travelling preacher professing to be a Christian could have the use of this house at such times as was not occupied by the society, by the application of two respectable citizens. Following this rule, they offered their house to the German Lutherans who had lost theirs by fire. This society however, had been accommodated, and the offer was not accepted, but in declining the friendly offer made by the members of the Universalist Church, they were pleased to say, that "they cannot do this without expressing the most heartfelt gratitude for the Christian sympathy manifested to us by your Society." This note which has done honour to the liberal sentiments of the Lutherans was signed by Messrs. Helmuth, Smidt and Kammerer.

In 1796, Mr. Thomas Jones arrived in Philadelphia from England, and was ordained by the moderator of the church. He did not continue many years, and we are not sufficiently acquainted with this gentleman's mode of preaching whilst here, to decide why he did not succeed: he however fills at present a station in New England, with honour to himself, and, as we understand, is much loved and esteemed by his people.

Noah Murray commenced in this city, in 1807, but soon discontinued, as his preaching did not appear to be crowned with great success. On the arrival of Mr. Richards in 1809, affairs began to take a different turn; many attended who had not hitherto known the doctrine, and were led from darkness to the light of divine truth.

But Mr. Richards was not well calculated for a preacher of a persecuted doctrine; his feelings were sensibly acute, and he wanted that spirit of enterprise which distinguished John Murray: his talents however, were peculiarly adapted to the sublime and

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deep portions of Holy Writ; the prophesies of Isaiah, and the Apocalypse, usually considered abstruse, brightened with noon-day clearness, when commented on by Richards.— Yet his mind towered among us like some majestic ruin; an afflictive providence had affected him at intervals with a derangement of his mental energies; this accumulated in an attack succeeding Typhus fever, and he fell a victim to melancholy. Sacred be the scene that followed,—we do not wish,—we cannot pourtray the feelings which the melancholy end of that great and good man caused in the minds of those who can cast the mantle of charity over a scene which robbed us of the pious and exemplary Richards.

The enemies of the truth triumphed for a season; they even to this day rejoice; aye, those *called* Christians, have imitated the conduct of their spiritual fathers, and cried as they did of our master “crucify him, crucify him.”— Whilst living, “not a clergyman would take him by the hand” because he preached that “as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.” Yet he was not friendless; he was a distinguished mason, and the principles of that order unite in one sacred band of men of the most opposite opinions.

The death of Mr. R. chilled for a time the ardour of our people, the shepherd was smitten, and the sheep scattered. The blow was heavy; it made us *feel* that we were but pilgrims and sojourners here as our fathers were, and led the mind to consider that if our earthly tabernacle were destroyed we had a Universalist Church, where the whole human family will worship, “a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

The Church was closed until Mr. Ebenezer Lester, in 1816, came on a visit, and remained about one year. Mr. Mitchell of N. York also paid us a visit, and by his abilities and popular mode of speaking, no less than his irreproachable character, tended to unite the scattered lambs of the flock.

In September, 1818, Mr. Kneeland, by request, came to this city; during his pastoral care the congregation has increased, and a new church has been organized in the Northern Liberties, in a manner highly conducive to the extent of the gospel;—it may be said

of them “how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.”

There is every expectation of the continuance of this prosperity; the prejudices of the people are dissipating, notwithstanding the exertions of the clergy; the citizens begin to perceive the true reason of the opposition of their teachers to the doctrine, and come to hear the gospel of peace.

The C. Messenger, which has done much towards disseminating our sentiments, was commenced by partialists; they have been driven from the field, their tenets cannot bear the light of revelation; they must sink, and the homespun garment of their self righteousness be burnt; but “they themselves shall be saved, yet so as by fire.”

For the present we close; should events of the history of Universalism in this city be known to any person, which we have not noticed, we would feel obliged by a sketch of them.\* If this sketch may seem to have too much of the retaliating spirit, let it be remembered that, the spirit of persecution uses every means against us, nay! was it not for the laws of the country, we should feel it in a few years as strong as the *Inquisition*.

\* In addition to this “brief sketch,” we wish to add the name of Mr. Banger, a worthy and amiable brother, who has always tendered his services gratuitously, and who has supplied the desk, when otherwise it would have been vacant, (excepting what time it was thought best that the doors of the church should be closed,) for more than twenty years; whose services, so far as we have understood, have ever been acceptable and edifying to the church. Mr. Gilson, also, whose name has not been mentioned, preached in the church, from February to May, 1818; and although, for obvious reasons, it was thought not best to settle him, yet the church has never been better filled, for so long a time, than it was during his preaching; which, on the whole, as we believe, was productive of much good. ED.

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#### INSTALLATION.

On Wednesday, the 3rd instant, the Rev. ELIAS SMITH was installed to the pastoral care of the “*Third Universalist Society*” in Boston. Sermon by the Rev. Richard Carterique, of Attleborough, from 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25

#### DEDICATION.

On Thursday, the 4th inst. the First Universalist Meeting House in Roxbury, was dedicated and set apart to the service of Almighty God. Sermon by the Rev. Hosea Ballou, of Boston, from Malachi iii. 10.

## Christian Messenger.

Philadelphia, Saturday, January 13, 1821.

### A TREATISE ON THE CARNAL MIND.

*Continued from page 92.*

The Indians believe, not only in a good, but also in a bad Spirit; I am informed that they offer sacrifices to both; but much the oftenest to the latter. On being asked, by a traveller among them, the reason of this, they answered to this effect. “There is no danger of the good Spirit; he will not hurt us; but we are more afraid of the bad Spirit; and we are obliged to offer many sacrifices to him, to keep him good natured!”

Do not laugh, kind reader, at the poor ignorant Indians, for their ideas of the good and bad Spirit are a thousand times more consistent than the ideas of many, who would like to be called christian people, respecting God and the devil! Indeed, I should say that their idea of the good Spirit is not far from being correct; for “God is not worshipped by men’s hands as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all, life, breath, and all things.” Acts xvii. 25. “In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure; then said I, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.—By the which WILL we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Heb. x. 6, 9, 10. The only sacrifice which God requires, since the offering of Jesus who was offered once for all, is love and true obedience to the moral precepts of Christ. And perhaps the Indians come as nigh to the true worship of God, in the spirit, as many who attempt to worship him in the letter. But in their sacrificing to, and worshipping the bad spirit, they appear to me to be something like the worshippers of Baal, or Moloch, or the worshippers of the angry gods of the Pagan world; and perhaps the reader will be able to discover some analogy between those worshippers and the worship of some professed christians at the present day.

The above remarks, however, are not designed to cast any reflection upon

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those who worship, in sincerity, any being whatever; whether real or imaginary; or however erroneous they may be in their ideas; but they are rather designed to correct the error. For I am willing to suppose that the worshippers of Baal, or Moloch, or the angry gods of the Pagans, were all sincere; or that the Indians are sincere in sacrificing to the bad spirit; or that christians are sincere, who as much believe in the existence of a real and personal devil as they do in the existence of God; but all this sincerity does not make one false idea correct; and therefore the reader will bear with me in my remarks.

It would require many volumes to state one half of the frightful and ridiculous stories that have been told, preached, and published about the devil; some of which are so absurd, that, admitting there is such a being, I should suppose they would even make him blush for the folly and weakness of man!

But one moment of serious reflection must convince any rational mind of the fallacy of all such accounts.

Admitting there is such a being, I would ask, has not God the supreme control over him? Can he go beyond the length of his *chain of darkness*? If not, (unless by chance, the devil should break loose!) of which I believe there is not much danger) can he do any thing unless God should permit him? And will God permit him to do any thing, which, all things considered, ought not to be done? Can we be so unreasonable as to suppose that God, or even a man, of good sense, would employ an agent to do something contrary to his own will; or to do that which he would not do himself, were it in his power, rather than not to have it done? Or would he suffer an enemy to do such a thing, if it were in his power to prevent it? If not, let us only be assured that God is our friend; that he will not hurt us; and we need not be afraid of the devil!

Let me only keep so clear from debt, and from all other crimes, that I am not liable to be imprisoned by the sheriff, and I shall not be afraid of his deputy. A little snarling animal, tied with a strong cord, which he could not break, might indeed frighten a child; but I would ask, would the child be in much danger, so long as the father kept hold

of the other end of the line? Let the love and good sense of a kind parent give the answer.

I cannot be too thankful, when I realize that I am fully delivered from this *horrid monster!* This cruel and slavish idea! Nor would I, for any sum that could be proposed, have my children so tormented with it as I have been. It is my opinion, that if parents could but once be brought to realize the evil consequences of filling the minds of their children with a thousand frightful ideas, many of which, even they themselves do not believe, they would certainly abandon the practice.

But one might justly think, according to the practice of some parents, that they knew of no better way to govern their children, or to keep them in due subjection; hence they endeavour to scare, terrify, and frighten them into their duty, by threatening them with many things which they have no idea of performing, and which they themselves do not believe will ever take place.

Such kind of threatenings can have no good effect. They may, at first, fill the child with a little slavish fear; but the child will soon become hardened, by hearing threats which he never sees fulfilled, and, at length, he, in a great measure, loses that confidence which a child ever ought to place in a parent's word.

Whoever adopts this mode of government, will most assuredly lose the confidence of those whom they govern; and they are too apt to conclude that the fault is altogether in their children or servants; that they are naturally and intolerably bad; so saucy, so impudent, so disobedient, and hard to be moved; not considering that they themselves have been, in a great measure, the cause.

I would by no means endeavour to exculpate children or servants, who are disobedient to the reasonable commands of their parents or masters, of which, many are too prone; but we ought, in the first place, to be assured that there is no blame on the part of the parent, or master; for if there be a remedy applied to the child or servant, will do no good; or at least, will not effect a cure.

To be continued.

*Christian Messenger office, No. 58, Chestnut street, Philadelphia.*

THE CARRIER'S ADDRESS,  
TO THE PATRONS OF THE  
CHRISTIAN MESSENGER:

January 1, 1821.

Kind Patrons, while others present their address;

And your favours enjoy, say, can you do less,  
Than grant us a blessing, or something to cheer  
A heart that now wishes you *happy new year!*

Who wishes your friends to prove faithful  
and true,

Your debtors soon pay ev'ry cent that's your  
due;

No losses betide you, by land or by sea,

No sickness to pay for, no lawyer to fee.

Your traffic and trade, may they thrive in  
your hands,

Your income increase from your houses and  
lands;

May heaven, from fire, defend all your store,  
And grant you rich blessings to favour the poor

Have you err'd the last year? may that be  
forgiven,

The eye that was dark see the glory of heav'n.  
A wrong have you done to a foe, or to friend?  
Repair'd be that wrong before this year shall  
end.

Since he who salutes you your paper has  
brought,

Great favours our merciful *father* has wrought:  
A luxuriant summer, a ripe'ning fall,  
And thousand of blessings for gratitude call.

But the time of sweet flowers and fruits is  
now past;

The snow, and the sleet, and the cold chilling  
blast,

Unsparingly fall on the boy as he comes  
To bring you *glad tidings* to cheer your sweet  
homes.

To fill you with love, and relieve you from fear  
To give you the truth which is simple and clear,

From the regions of error directing your eyes  
To *him*, who is merciful, gracious and wise.

We have to regret that our labours are small.

Far, very far short of our wishes they fall;

But what we have lack'd in human invention,  
We hop'd to supply with an honest intention.

While some out of zeal, like a Saul full of ire,  
Have wish'd all our numbers consum'd in

the fire,

Others rejoice that they're now made to see  
That life and salvation to all men are free.

Tho' some have predicted our life was but  
short,

And to make their words true, have withdrawn their support;

Thro' gen'rous patrons, in health we yet live,

And an answer to all men are ready to give.

But let us remember, imperfect are all,

And while thinking we stand, take heed lest

we fall;

That our errors and faults may all be forgiv'n,

We'll pray that our foes may find mercy in

heaven.

If some of these lines, which we give as our  
own,

We take from a friend, that friend is well  
known;\*

Who, should we think proper to give up our  
race,

We shall recommend you, as worthy our place.

\* Universalist Magazine.

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